

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, JA
SUBJECT: THIRTY-THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF END OF PACIFIC WAR

1. ANNIVERSARY OF END OF PACIFIC WAR, MARKED AS USUAL
BY VARIETY OF CEREMONIES INCLUDING TRADITIONAL SERVICES
FOR 3,000,000 WAR DEAD AT TOKYO'S YASUKUNI SHRINE ON
AUGUST 15, HELD SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE AND RECEIVED GREATER
THAN USUAL ATTENTION THIS YEAR BECAUSE ACCORDING TO
BUDDHIST TRADITION, 33RD ANNIVERSARY OF DEATH MARKS
END OF FORMAL MOURNING PERIOD.

2. MEDIA USED OCCASION TO MORALIZE
AGAINST WAR AND INTERNATIONAL
NUCLEAR AND CONVENTIONAL ARMS RACES. MAJOR TELEVISION
STATIONS RAN UNUSUALLY LENGTHY REPORTS ON ANTI-NUCLEAR
WEAPON GROUP ACTIVITIES, MEMORIAL SERVICE AT BUDOKAN
HALL ATTENDED BY EMPEROR AND OVER 6,000 MOURNERS, AND
YASUKUNI SHRINE SERVICE. TELEVISION RAN LARGE NUMBER
OF SPECIAL DOCUMENTARIES AND END-OF-WAR NEWSREELS. MAIN
SUBSTANTIVE THEME OF MEDIA COVERAGE WAS CONCERN THAT,
WITH MORE THAN HALF OF JAPANESE POPULATION BORN AFTER
WAR, YOUNGER GENERATION MIGHT HAVE FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY
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WHICH BEFELL JAPAN AND HAD TO BE EDUCATED BY OLDER
GENERATIONS. PEACE CONSTITUTION AND THREE NON-NUCLEAR
PRINCIPLES WERE ONCE AGAIN CITED AS KEY TO PRESERVING
PEACE FOR JAPAN. IN EFFORT TO TIE IN ANNIVERSARY WITH
CURRENT THEMES, EDITORIALS IN MAJOR PAPERS EXPRESSED
CONCERN THAT RENEWED INTEREST IN NATIONAL DEFENSE AND
EXPANDING COOPERATION WITH CHINA AT TIME WHEN U.S. AND

PRC APPEARED TO BE COOPERATING TO COUNTER SOVIET MILITARY BUILDUP IN PACIFIC MIGHT ONCE AGAIN EMBROIL JAPAN IN BIG-POWER POLITICS WHICH LED TO WAR HALF CENTURY AGO.

3. END-OF-WAR ANNIVERSARY CEREMONIES WERE PRECEDED BY WORLD CONFERENCE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT SESSIONS IN TOKYO (AUG 1-2), HIROSHIMA (AUG. 6), AND NAGASAKI (AUG. 9). TOKYO PORTION OF CONFERENCE SUCCEEDED IN OBTAINING COOPERATION OF COMMUNIST-INSPIRED GENSUIKYO, SOCIALIST-BACKED GENSUIKIN, AND DEMOCRATIC-SOCIALIST SUPPORTED KAKUKINKAIGI, MARKING FIRST TIME IN 14 YEARS THAT THE THREE FEUDING BAN-THE-BOMB GROUPS HAD AGREED TO PARTICIPATE JOINTLY IN SUCH CONFERENCE. BAN-THE-BOMB MOVEMENTS HAVE LOST CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT IN RECENT YEARS, PARTLY AS WARTIME MEMORIES FADE AND PARTLY AS RESULT OF POLITICALLY-INSPIRED BICKERING AMONG GROUPS. IN EFFORT TO INJECT NEW LIFE INTO DECLINING MOVEMENT, GENSUIKIN AND GENSUIKYO HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTING TO RE-UNIFY THEIR ORGANIZATIONS, WHICH SPLIT DURING 1960S. HOWEVER, INABILITY OF GROUPS TO COOPERATE IN THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE SESSIONS OUTSIDE TOKYO (GENSUIKIN MEMBERS PARTICIPATED ONLY AS INDIVIDUALS, WHILE KAKUKINKAIGI STAGED ENTIRELY SEPARATE MEETING) INDICATED MOVEMENT REMAINS FAR FROM UNITED.

4. MANNER IN WHICH PM FUKUDA ATTENDED YASUKUNI SHRINE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CEREMONIES ADDED SPARK OF CONTROVERSY TO ANNIVERSARY OBSERVANCE. PRIME MINISTERS HAVE ATTENDED YASUKUNI'S SERVICES SINCE DAYS OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER YOSHIDA, DESPITE CHARGES BY LEFT WING (PARTICULARLY JSP) AND CHRISTIAN GROUPS THAT THIS VIOLATED CONSTITUTIONAL PROHIBITIONS AGAINST STATE INVOLVEMENT IN RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES. AS CENTER OF PRE-WAR STATE-SPONSORED SHINTO FAITH, WHICH WAS CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH MILITARY REGIME, YASUKUNI HAS BEEN VIEWED BY LEFT AS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT SYMBOL OF WHAT THEY SEE AS LATENT FORCES SEEKING REVIVAL OF MILITARISM. ONGOING CAMPAIGN BY RIGHT-WING ELEMENTS FOR RESUMPTION OF GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR SHRINE AS MEMORIAL TO NATIONAL WAR DEAD HAS HEIGHTENED THESE CONCERNS. FORMER PRIME MINISTER MIKI, IN A BOW TO OPPOSITION, ADOPTED LOW-KEY PROFILE AT CEREMONIES TWO YEARS AGO, TAKING PAINS TO EMPHASIZE "PRIVATE" CHARACTER OF HIS ATTENDANCE. FUKUDA THIS YEAR BROKE WITH MIKI PRECEDENT IN USING HIS OFFICIAL TITLE AND GOVERNMENT LIMOUSINE (RATHER THAN LDP VEHICLE) IN VISITING SHRINE AND IN ARRIVING IN COMPANY OF CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY ABE AND OTHER CABINET OFFICIALS, THUS SPARKING LOUDER THAN USUAL PROTESTS BY SOCIALISTS AND

OTHER GROUPS, AND MEDIA SPECULATION THAT FUKUDA MAY HAVE INTENDED SYMBOLIC GESTURE TO LDP RIGHT IN WAKE OF PFT SIGNING WITH VIEW TOWARD DECEMBER'S LDP PARTY PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER FIRM ASSERTION BY FUKUDA (TO PRESS) AND CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY ABE (TO INTERPELLATING SOCIALISTS IN LOWER HOUSE CABINET COM- ANOTHER YEAR. ONLY ONE MAJOR DAILY, ASAHI, HAS MITTEE) THAT VISIT WAS PRIVATE WILL PUT THIS PERENNIAL ISSU TO REST FOR ANOTHER YEAR. ONLY ONE MAJOR DAILY, ASAHI, HAS HIGH-LIGHTED FUKUDA'S YASUKUNI APPEARANCE; OTHER PAPERS FOCUSED ON ATTENDANCE OF EMPEROR AND EMPRESS ALONG WITH

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ALMOST 7,000 MOURNERS AT BUDOKAN SERVICES.
4. COMMENT: DESPITE PREPONDERANCE OF POST-WAR GENERATION, 33 YEARS AFTER ARMISTICE, WAR CONTINUES TO AROUSE POWERFUL, OCCASIONALLY CONFLICTING, EMOTIONS IN JAPAN. WHILE ANNIVERSARY OF ARMISTICE TOOK PLACE AGAINST BACKGROUND OF INCREASED JAPANESE WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS DEFENSE ISSUES OBJECTIVELY, DEEP-SEATED PUBLIC ABHORRENCE OF WAR REMAINS IMPORTANT FACTOR INFLUENCING JAPANESE VIEWS ON INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ROLE AND SELF-DEFENSE CAPABILITIES. DESPITE SPECIAL BUDDHIST SIGNIFICANCE OF THIRTY-THIRD ANNIVERSARY, NEITHER MOURNING NOR ACUTE SENSITIVITY TO WAR-RELATED ISSUES LIKELY TO DISAPPEAR FOR A LONG TIME TO COME. MANSFIELD

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